THE CAPTIVE MIND

This paper will probably be more along the line of a personal reaction to Czeslaw Milosz's book, The Captive Mind, than a scholarly appraisal of it. This is primarily because I reacted emotionally to the book rather than having it just engage my mind, and I suspect that Milosz wanted the reader to feel something important when he wrote the book. Milosz is a poet, and feelings are often the stuff with which poets, in particular, deal. My reaction to the book, then, is a little difficult to describe, possibly because Milosz made me wary at first and I was conflicted somewhat in my reception to the book.

To begin with, my grandmother is Hungarian but left Hungary in the 1890's, when there was a governmental reaction to Baptists promulgated by the Catholics then in power. I had only my grandmother's prejudices about the intellegentsia of Eastern Europe, and they were powerful. I also grew up in New York during the 1930's and 40's when it was not only allowed to be pro-Russian, but because of the war it was permissible to be anti-European Rightists and pro-the European Left, including Russia. My distrust of the Right with all its antis, along with Milosz, made me much more open to a trust of Socialist writings. I believe that I grew up thinking that Communism had to be better than what had gone before when the intelligentsia (read remains of the old aristocracy), and particularly the Catholic intelligentsia held the reins. I also grew up wise enough to know that the "Worker's Paradise" was never paradise unless one were part of the Communist hierarchy. But then, Eastern Europe was never paradise unless one was part of the privileged class.

Having first gotten through my own prejudices and questions about Milosz's purpose (Who's side was he on anyway -- certainly not on the side of the revolutionaries!) and my questions about whether this was to be religious brain washing (and remember that I was a young adult during the McCarthy era, when the

cry was "Pinko, Communist, homosexual!" in that order) and another attempt on the part of the religious establishment (of whatever stripe) to tell us how good we are and how bad they are, and enlist our sympathies on the side of the displaced middle-class in Poland (and for that matter all of Eastern Europe). As I said, I began with my prejudices.

As I began to read I settled down and began to trust Milosz. By the time I had gotten through the character portrayals and finished the book, I was still conflicted, still wary, still questioning of whether I was won over to Milosz's side and still questioning whether I was being subjected to a Western equivalent of socialist realism (Republican realism?), but willing to reread the book. It took three readings for me to achieve some kind of equilibrium out of which I could begin to address a paper on this book. Milosz intends for the book to be battlefield for the mind, and indeed copies the enemy's way. Who is to say that in destroying the enemy before our eyes, he is not also accomplishing a second task, that of convincing by the same type of arguments used to disparage the West, that he can disparage the East just as effectively and convince us that the Right is right in their opinion of the New Faith. Without being able to question him personally, we will never know if Milosz is honest in his appraisal or merely feels that if he eats a man's bread, that he owes him loyalty and thereby hatred of his enemies (which would be a very Eastern European way of thinking).

On my second reading, Murti-Bing made a much greater impact, and I thought about Poles who had been raised to so fear and hate Russia, but were also so disenchanted by the world of Eastern Europe prior to World War II, and so incredibly destroyed by World War II (witness his later chapters on Alpha and

Beta) that something, anything that replaced upheaval had to be better. Milosz is able to weave a spell which draws one into the web of Murti-Bing and one can understand better the pull of a philosophy that replaces the nihilism of the Hitler years with a philosphy of serenity and happiness -- even if it did convey a blunting of the sensibilities. For people who have lost everything and seen their beloved country demolished, their historic cities bombed out of existence, and their culture obliterated, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks in the streets, and when one's city (witness Vilno) had passed back and forth through the centuries time after time, better Murti-Bing and an attitude of "this too will pass" (as have all the others), than another futile attempt to defend one's soil against far more powerful aggressors. Murti-Bing, peace and acceptance was at least better than attempting another war with absolutely no tools, and particularly in this age, no tools to compare with nuclear weapons. As my grandmother said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is impossible to drop bombs from the back of a farm wagon." One then accepts the inevitable, as one has accepted all previous inevitabilities. Rebellion is only an option if there is any hope for it succeeding, but workers with bricks in their hands are no match for Russian tanks and Eastern nations have attempted revolts and wound up crying to the West "Where were you when we needed you?". These aggressors at least let one live, as long as one is docile. Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of oppression, not joining the oppressor.

In his chapter on Murti-Bing, what Milosz does not say is also important, and the brief glimpses he gives us of the Polish intellectual climate before World War II are desperately important. Does Witkiewicz's Insatiability give a true picture of Poland in 1932? It may, certainly if we compare other literature

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
CLIR DHC Grant 2026-2028

https://archive.org/details/2174.07.32

which comes to mind about Europe before the Hitler takeover. Unfortunately, we in America are illiterate about European cultural history. Most of the history we learn is either economically based or is based on who fought and won what war, and so we seldom see the intellectual climate that brought about the huge social changes. Our literature courses tend to tell us about Americans or Britons in Europe and so we have Hemingway's, Isherwood's, Gertrude Stein's or some other American author's view of Europe as seen through the eyes of Americans playing there, but none of the reality of Europeans living there. We know relatively little about the European mindset which allowed the takeover of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Stalin, et al. Is Witkiewicz's picture of Poland pre-Murti Bing an accurate representation of the Poland that was, and if it is, then the Poles could indeed not go back to the old ruling intellegentsia and to the leadership of the government-in-exile in London, who were of that class. But go where? Milosz states that religion was not a viable alternative for Poland. Religion was practiced only by the peasants (and by religion, we assume Roman Catholicism) while the intellectual elite (interestingly enough, probably educated in Catholic universities, many of them) were breathing such an ethereal atmosphere of learning that they were totally out of touch with the realities of the political world and with the spiritual base which anchored the worker and the peasant. It is no wonder that the alienated intellectual (p.8) longed to belong to the masses. Interestingly enough, now that he can indeed belong to the masses (i.e. in the political East), the intellectual realizes into what a trap he has fallen and longs to escape from the Worker State. The intellectual and the worker are not now and never were brothers -- yet the intellectual cannot and does not fit the bourgoise pattern, for he is determinately downwardly or upwardly mobile depending upon his success. Also, it is in the intellectual that the cultural history of his nation resides, for it is patently obvious

Excellent point.

that what higher classical education eventually does is to carry the common culture to succeeding generations. It is only natural that pride in one's nation's art, literature, indeed all cultural pursuits must reside in those best educated to them. Hence the bind: Those who become the writers and intellectuals of the New Faith are those most in possession of the old, and those most likely to be aware of the poor fit the New Faith has upon the Old Ideas, and ipsolaterally, the poor fit the Old Ideas have for the New Times. Such, unfortunately, is the nature of the life of the intellectual and both the reward and the source of the discomfort. So the intellectual looks, if not to the East, then to the West. Yet, he cannot look to England, France, Germany because they were where the old ideas originated (since, as Milosz points out, Poland for centuries adopted the Western European ideas as its own), and if not there, where? America? Not really. Americans seem naive and inexperienced compared to Europeans. We have not been tried in the crucible of war on our own territory for over a hundred years. The East has convinced Poland that the terror Europe has gone through will be gone through also by the United States, because the ideas which "corrupted" Europe corrupt the Americans. And he finds himself feeling that it is unfair for America to have escaped the terror thus far (p.30). Particularly since his exposure to the Diamat, he keeps wondering when the fall predicted by the Party will come and if Fascism is doomed (and America by Party definition is Fascist) when will the end come? This is not too heinous a reading of America, by the way, depending upon whether one is part of the in-crowd or of the others with their noses to the windows looking in. Still, Milosz has a problem. He sees the masses in the West enjoying a standard of living far beyond that which the masses of the East can even imagine. It is the mass culture, not the standard of living, which dismays him. The mass

culture of America is unimpressive to Europeans. Obviously, much of Western culture is mindless. It is produced by market research firms which decide who has the disposable income to buy the product, and then produce only for that market, which effectively cuts out any who might buy something else, because nothing else is available, except possibly in university bookstores and on university campuses, where it is obviously consumed by the intellectual elite.

What Milosz suggests the people of Eastern Europe are looking for is leadership from the West, intellectual works that will bear the seed of hope for the future (p. 40). Christianity, for example, is looked at but not to. A reborn Christianity might be an important carrier of that message, but of what stripe. Modern totalitarianism has had to dispose of the Jew, and one suspects that a basic reason for antisemitism is that Jews are the "people of the Book." What the Bible addresses so pungently is the very question which Milosz's last chapter asks, "How can people live under constant fear?" Embedded in the Judeo-Christian scripture is a message of hope, if one can convince the Eastern Europeans to look there for it. The old Testament, in the voices of prophets and poets, speaks for a people who are captive:

> By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we
> remembered Zion.
> On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps,
> Though our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs,
> And our despoilers urged us to be joyous, "Sing us the
> songs of Zion!"
>
> How can we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?
> If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten!
> May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not,
> If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.
>
> Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, the day
> of Jerusalem,
> When they said, "Raze it, raze it to the foundations!"
> O daugher of Babylon, you destroyer, happy the man who
> shall repay you the evil you have done us!
> Happy the man who shall seize and smash your little
> ones against the rock!
>
> (Ps. 137)

That is poetry of the oppressed! If the Roman church, which is for all intents and purposes the church available in Poland, can do with scripture what the Black church in America, for instance, has done with the Biblical theme of a people carried away into slavery, the possibilities are endless. The theme of dispersion (and Milosz poignantly describes the diaspora into which Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians have been driven) and restoration is a powerful theme in the prophets and as Christians we are not left without a voice. The question is,

can a church which has centered on a very different view of scriptural religion (i.e. contemplation of the dying Christ) turn and offer the kind of Biblical religion which probably sustained the Jews in the concentration camps and which American Blacks have today, which sustains them in an oppressive society which carried them into diaspora.

To get from A to B, one needs a bridge. I do not have a bridge. The foregoing to me was what the first part of the book brought to mind. The second part of the book brought forth other ideas.

That's all right.

The whole question of how artists relate to the question of social realism and dialectical materialism as set forth in the character sketches revealed more than just the characters of the men involved. It revealed a great deal about Milosz and occasioned many of the same questions that the first chapter raised. Milosz's acceptance, at first, of the discipline of social realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art, but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, but certainly not speak <u>for</u>. Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or

political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which a new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or the revolution must turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo. One must remember the excesses of Robespierre's government in France, for example. W.H.McNeill, writing of the French Revolution, in The Rise of the West says,

> "Liberty," after all, might mean the right of the majority to override every obstacle to its will. By an easy paradox, liberty might mean the right of a clique to enlighten the people, using exhortation and threat as normal stock-in-trade but in case of necessity resorting openly to violence in order to convince doubters and prevent enemies of the people from spreading the poison of deceit. But liberty might also mean the exact opposite: the right of individuals to do whatever they liked within the broadest practicable limits, even when their conduct displeased or offended a majority. In short, liberty might mean either a radical extension or a rigorous restriction of governmental authority; and the word was regularly invoked to justify both policies.

THE CHARACTER SKETCHES

Alpha

The difficulty I have with Alpha is that the possibility of selling out always exists -- each of us has a price (whether we believe it or not) and puts a value on what is needed to survive. Not everyone has the gift of martyrdom, and as one of my colleagues reminded MCC clergy (who are prime targets and understand martyrdom very well) at a conference recently, it is a gift that can be used only once. Alpha's importance and his ability to use common symbols to reach essential truths were such that he could sway large numbers, but he did not look at his responsibility to those he was moving to be ethical with them. Art must not be dishonest. Art is essentially the last stand of truth. Alpha became successful not only at the price of his own soul, but at the price of the souls of others. Alpha brought forth a generation of young loyalists who believed in

what he wrote and their reward was to be killed in the Warsaw uprising and if they survived that to be later jailed by the new warlords for being too loyal to their own nation and unable to become believers in the New Faith. Alpha's readers were caught in forces which were none of their doing.

Alpha mocked the absurdity that hoped for a sudden political change. He compared the old intelligentsia with the ethical purity of the New Faith. The Party applauded and he was rewarded. Faced with having to adhere to "social realism" he bled. His denunciation of his own past and his work was not demanded of him, it was a gift he made to the Party.

Beta

Beta became hooked on his own anger. All the fury he felt became his daily dose of venom. Milosz describes him as a "nihilist," offering nothing because he sees no hope, he accepts the New Faith, and becames caught up in its cadence of hatred. When one has nothing constructive to offer, one can always offer hatred. Moving faster and faster, he eventually cannot move fast enough to escape from his own disillusionment. Yet he could see a new order which was just within his grasp. His anger, which drove him to ruthlessness in his description of life in the concentration camp, drives him equally to ruthlessness with himself, and eventually to suicide.

Gamma

As the arbiter of who would publish and who would not, he would use the need of men like Milosz to write and he would climb the bureaucratic ladder at their expense, but he would always be afraid. Gamma is a hack in the service of the Revolution, but the revolution is aging, and eventually the nation will see through the subterfuge and will overturn it because it does not grow out of the people.

Frederick Douglass put it aptly when he said:

> Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening; they want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. This struggle may be a moral one or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never did and it never will. Find out what people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice which will be imposed upon them. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

As Milosz discusses Gamma he also discusses dialectical materialism and socialist realism and the attendant difficulties for writers, artists and other intellectuals and it began to make sense, and I began to share the atmosphere of his frustration as a poet and writer. It important for us to realize that poets need their own culture and language both as vehicle and as audience. To become a refugee means to learn to think, become acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of note (and it is important to recognize that this man is a poet of the finest caliber, as a Nobel laureate) which would be a very long process. For Milosz to weigh that against staying and working for what he believes is the oppressor of his people had to be a serious consideration. But, it enabled him to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of his chosen field. Without that, he was no one professionally and artistically and to be no one is to die.

Delta

Delta bears out in reality the saying that "only the mad are free." Delta, of all the writers depicted never was free because of his need for a patron to support his alcoholism. Yet, with the state as his patron he is freer than he ever was, and because his style is so mad, he possibly can get away with being closer to himself than the other writers, and probably speak more truth, although veiled truth. Yet, he is in some ways more dangerous to the State,

because he speaks in symbols that can be taken many ways and he can even be "apocalyptic," writing in a code which the authorities may miss (because of their literalness), but which the people may not. The potential is there for Delta to be free, maybe. As Milosz leaves him, he is about to be restored to political rectitude, for a time. How much truth, how much damage can he do if he is so minded, and sober enough to do it? One can only hope that Delta is dedicated enough to freedom, sober enough, and wise enough to take that advantage.

To quote McNeill again (P.838)

> A man may carry two quite separate cultural worlds about with him, so long as it is easy to draw the line between situations where one set of judgments and behavior patterns is appropriate and those in which the other set should be employed. But clear discrimination is not always possible. Indeed, the imperatives of one system may in critical circumstances conflict with those of the second to produce sudden shifts in individual behavior having incalculable and sometimes puzzling consequences for all concerned. In the mass, this sort of unstable individual behavior may resonate within an excited crowd to induce outbursts of sudden violence.

The State may not be aware how close to the surface violence is, and again it may, hence the necessity for Murti-Bing and those things which produce its soporific state.

Milosz's chapter on Ketman to me logically belongs at the end of the book. It is a means whereby those in slavery survive and in turn laugh or sneer at their captors. It is a lie, and everyone knows it is a lie. Yet it is a very useful lie. It is also contemptuous, and true contempt breeds anger in both the contemptuous and the contemptible. It is dangerous, and for that very reason it is a game which is played in earnest. It is a charade. I recognize in myself the ability to play at Ketman with the straight world, and the contempt I feel

for it when I am forced to play it, and the disrespect I feel for myself and for the one who makes me play it. All oppressed people are masters at Ketman, we just have not had a name for it up until now. Blacks in America, playing at Stepinfetchit or Aunt Jemima were playing Ketman. Gays playing it straight, are masters of Ketman. Liberal Christians in fundamentalist churches play at Ketman. We all share in this monstrous game of lies wherein we preserve our souls for yet one more day. But Ketman covers anger as well. And the anger which boils under the surface may erupt at some time. A revolution has a beginning, a middle, and an end. One cannot live in revolutionary days for ever. Eventually something like normalcy must take over, and is is probably true that thesis and antithesis eventually produce some synthesis.

Milosz says the effects of a revolution is like the effect of a flood. Six feet of silt cover everything and much that existed is torn up and deposited elsewhere. There is no way back to the status quo ante the revolution, because much that was present is no longer there. The French revolution effectively swept away the ancient vested interests that prevented power coming into the hands of the people and gave the citizenry power. But, it also produced Napoleon and the blood bath which Europe endured and which eventuated in economic ruin for some countries which would never recover their status prior to the Napoleonic wars (like Spain). It also began a series of political, economic, and philosophic movements which produced the very revolution which Milosz decries. Perhaps even now some force is being generated in Eastern Europe which will effect change. Certainly, while people continue to permit the situation there to exist and keep their true feelings hidden (using Murti-Bing and Ketman) or any other process which keeps alive hope and independent thought, there is the possibility of change. Farenheit 451 points to a truth; ideas do not have to be written

down to live, and ours has been a print-oriented culture since Gutenberg and a

script-oriented culture long before that, but any oral tradition in the world predates any written work and is a possibility when all other hopes of reaching the masses are impossible. Poets are bards, and if they can be enlisted on one side, they can be enlisted on the other.

There are questions which remain.
Since Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Lutheranism are primarily state churches the question arises, if the state dies, does the church die as well? And if it does, what about religion which is not a state church, but which requires voluntary association? Does this religion also die when the state dies? If it does not, is there a possibility for a resurgence of adherence to Catholicism in Poland now that association is not only voluntary but prohibited?

Why is the church and its influence growing in Third World countries? Two thirds of believers in Christianity now live in the Third World. Why does Christianity speak to them when it has ceased to speak effectively in Europe?

Is it possible that God as the God of the powerful is dying? By the very nature of the God of Judaism and Christianity, God is the God of the weak and oppressed and therefore as nations become aware of their oppression, as Poland has, that this visage of God comes more to the forefront and has more meaning. However, as the powerful find that the old faith which bolstered the status quo of the rich and powerful is no longer available, <u>that</u> Christianity dies, and a new Christianity, more in touch with its roots, begins to emerge. If so, there is hope for a new voice to be heard in Poland, and very likely it is being heard there now. I sincerely question whether Milosz and others of his generation will hear it because it is so foreign to the faith they knew.

Well written.
It seems to me that whatever connections there have been in the past between church and state, the links now are very

THE CAPTIVE MIND

The Captive Mind made me wary. To have been a homosexual in America for 40+ years and to hear the same people yelling (through those years), "Pinko, Communist, homosexual," in the same breath, and to know that the allies of those screaming are the religious right (rite?) and the right wing intellectuals, made many of my "be on guard" sensors alert. Additionally, my grandmother is a Hungarian once-refugee, who came to America running as a Baptist from one of Hungary's holy wars -- where the victor was the Catholic Church and the intelligentsia then in power. I have learned to be wary.

Milosz weaves a spell. One is indeed able, after reading this book, to understand the pull of the pill of Murti-Bing and its soothing power. For people who have lost everything in war after war, and who are asked to risk one more time and fight the only order that even looks capable to bringing order out of utter chaos, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. My grandfather said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is very hard to drop bombs from the backs of farm wagons." Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks. Better Murti-Bing and "this too will pass" (as have all the others). Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of rebellion, not joining the oppressor.

I was most impressed with his speaking as a poet, and realizing that poets need their own cultures and language both as vehicle and as audience; and to learn to think, be acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of some note would be a very long process. For him to weigh that against staying and working for the oppressor, but being able to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of one's chosen field was the most important consideration. Without that, he was

no one. To be no one is to die professionally and artistically.

Which leads to social realism. Milosz's acceptance of the discipline of socialist realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the Church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, and certainly in good faith was hard pressed to speak for.

Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which the new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or it must certainly turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo. One must remember the excesses of Robespierre's government in France, for example.

To be sure, Eastern Europe has a long tradition of trying to maintain small national states over against the encroaching power of larger, more powerful neighbors (or non-neighbors, in the case of Sweden's conquest of Poland). How eventually can the world assure Poland, Hungary, other Baltic and Balkan states sovereignty and the freedom to pursue their own goals without the West-East tug-of-war or threats of domination. This is not a new battle for these countries, it goes back to Atilla the Hun. The methods, to be sure, have changed, and the attempt to change the total national ideology, culture, language and political base is relatively new to this century. However, from the viewpoint of the oppressor nation, this is far more effective than what has

gone before and has been very impermanent. Of course, this does not make it right, but it certainly is more pragmatic. If one sets out to conquer, the most effective way is certainly better than half measures.

The difficulty for me in all of this is that each side decides that what the other is doing is politically worthy of outrage. But who is the victim and does the victim periodically change is this passing back and forth of nations? Is Hungary/Poland in the hands of the Catholic intelligentsia a better place for human beings than Murti-Bing? Well, yes, if you are a Catholic intellectual. On the other hand, if you are a Baptist, then the nation under the Catholic intelligentsia wasn't such a healthy place, either. And maybe, Murti-Bing is just a way-station on the road to change. Is thought control by sin and guilt, in the hands of the church healthier for human beings than dialectical materialism? From the position of a gay person who has been a Communist (I joined American Youth for Democracy in 1945) and who has returned to Christianity only after many years of oppression by the Church (Baptist and Catholic alike), and who has had to fight the Church/State complex in New York City (where the Catholic Church was referred to by the Gay Community as "Terry and the Prelates"), unfortunately I still find myself having to use Ketman in America in a thousand ways and find my sexual liberty threatened by the right and by the relgious forces in power. Obviously, it would be so under the Eastern Puritans as well. What Milosz brings home to me is the certaintude of my having to wish "a pox on both their houses," and the responsibility to continue to search for some new voice, some new philosophy, some new Messiah who offers freedom in all sorts of ways to human beings, to arise and set us all free.

Marjorie F. Ragona

no one. To be no one is to die professionally and artistically.

B

Which leads to social realism. Milosz's acceptance of the discipline of socialist realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the Church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, and certainly in good faith was hard pressed to speak <u>for</u>.

Ethical Ketman p. 75

Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which the new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or it must certainly turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo. One must remember the excesses of Robespierre's government in France, for example.

C

To be sure, Eastern Europe has a long tradition of trying to maintain small national states over against the encroaching power of larger, more powerful neighbors (or non-neighbors, in the case of Sweden's conquest of Poland). How eventually can the world assure Poland, Hungary, other Baltic and Balkan states sovereignty and the freedom to pursue their own goals without the West-East tug-of-war or threats of domination. This is <u>not</u> a new battle for these countries, it goes back to Atilla the Hun. The methods, to be sure, have changed, and the attempt to change the total national ideology, culture, language and political base is relatively new to this century. However, from the viewpoint of the oppressor nation, this is far more effective than what has

gone before and has been very impermanent. Of course, this does not make it right, but it certainly is more pragmatic. If one sets out to conquer, the most effective way is certainly better than half measures.

The difficulty for me in all of this is that each side decides that what the other is doing is politically worthy of outrage. But who is the victim and does the victim periodically change is this passing back and forth of nations? Is Hungary/Poland in the hands of the Catholic intelligentsia a better place for human beings than Murti-Bing? Well, yes, if you are a Catholic intellectual. On the other hand, if you are a Baptist, then the nation under the Catholic intelligentsia wasn't such a healthy place, either. And maybe, Murti-Bing is just a way-station on the road to change. Is thought control by sin and guilt, in the hands of the church healthier for human beings than dialectical materialism? From the position of a gay person who has been a Communist (I joined American Youth for Democracy in 1945) and who has returned to Christianity only after many years of oppression by the Church (Baptist and Catholic alike), and who has had to fight the Church/State complex in New York City (where the Catholic Church was referred to by the Gay Community as "Terry and the Prelates"), unfortunately I still find myself having to use Ketman in America in a thousand ways and find my sexual liberty threatened by the right and by the relgious forces in power. Obviously, it would be so under the Eastern Puritans as well. What Milosz brings home to me is the certaintude of my having to wish "a pox on both their houses," and the responsibility to continue to search for some new voice, some new philosophy, some new Messiah who offers freedom in all sorts of ways to human beings, to arise and set us all free.

Marjorie F. Ragona

M. RAGONA

THE CAPTIVE MIND

This paper will probably be more along the line of a personal reaction to Czeslaw Milosz's book, The Captive Mind, than a scholarly appraisal of it. This is primarily because I reacted emotionally to the book rather than having it just engage my mind, and I suspect that Milosz wanted the reader to feel something important when he wrote the book. Milosz is a poet, and feelings are often the stuff with which poets, in particular, deal. My reaction to the book, then, is a little difficult to describe, possibly because Milosz made me wary at first and I was conflicted somewhat in my reception to the book.

To begin with, my grandmother is Hungarian but left Hungary in the 1890's, when there was a governmental reaction to Baptists promulgated by the Catholics then in power. I had only my grandmother's prejudices about the intellegentsia of Eastern Europe, and they were powerful. I also grew up in New York during the 1930's and 40's when it was not only allowed to be pro-Russian, but because of the war it was permissible to be anti-European Rightists and pro-the European Left, including Russia. My distrust of the Right with all its antis, along with Milosz, made me much more open to a trust of Socialist writings. I believe that I grew up thinking that Communism had to be better than what had gone before when the intelligentsia (read remains of the old aristocracy), and particularly the Catholic intelligentsia held the reins. I also grew up wise enough to know that the "Worker's Paradise" was never paradise unless one were part of the Communist hierarchy. But then, Eastern Europe was never paradise unless one was part of the privileged class.

Having first gotten through my own prejudices and questions about Milosz's purpose (Who's side was he on anyway -- certainly not on the side of the revolutionaries!) and my questions about whether this was to be religious brain washing (and remember that I was a young adult during the McCarthy era, when the

cry was "Pinko, Communist, homosexual!" in that order) and another attempt on the part of the religious establishment (of whatever stripe) to tell us how good we are and how bad they are, and enlist our sympathies on the side of the displaced middle-class in Poland (and for that matter all of Eastern Europe). As I said, I began with my prejudices.

As I began to read I settled down and began to trust Milosz. By the time I had gotten through the character portrayals and finished the book, I was still conflicted, still wary, still questioning of whether I was won over to Milosz's side and still questioning whether I was being subjected to a Western equivalent of socialist realism (Republican realism?), but willing to reread the book. It took three readings for me to achieve some kind of equilibrium out of which I could begin to address a paper on this book. Milosz intends for the book to be battlefield for the mind, and indeed copies the enemy's way. Who is to say that in destroying the enemy before our eyes, he is not also accomplishing a second task, that of convincing by the same type of arguments used to disparage the West, that he can disparage the East just as effectively and convince us that the Right is right in their opinion of the New Faith. Without being able to question him personally, we will never know if Milosz is honest in his appraisal or merely feels that if he eats a man's bread, that he owes him loyalty and thereby hatred of his enemies (which would be a very Eastern European way of thinking).

On my second reading, Murti-Bing made a much greater impact, and I thought about Poles who had been raised to so fear and hate Russia, but were also so disenchanted by the world of Eastern Europe prior to World War II, and so incredibly destroyed by World War II (witness his later chapters on Alpha and

Beta) that something, anything that replaced upheaval had to be better. Milosz is able to weave a spell which draws one into the web of Murti-Bing and one can understand better the pull of a philosophy that replaces the nihilism of the Hitler years with a philosphy of serenity and happiness -- even if it did convey a blunting of the sensibilities. For people who have lost everything and seen their beloved country demolished, their historic cities bombed out of existence, and their culture obliterated, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks in the streets, and when one's city (witness Vilno) had passed back and forth through the centuries time after time, better Murti-Bing and an attitude of "this too will pass" (as have all the others), than another futile attempt to defend one's soil against far more powerful aggressors. Murti-Bing, peace and acceptance was at least better than attempting another war with absolutely no tools, and particularly in this age, no tools to compare with nuclear weapons. As my grandmother said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is impossible to drop bombs from the back of a farm wagon." One then accepts the inevitable, as one has accepted all previous inevitabilities. Rebellion is only an option if there is any hope for it succeeding, but workers with bricks in their hands are no match for Russian tanks and Eastern nations have attempted revolts and wound up crying to the West "Where were you when we needed you?". These aggressors at least let one live, as long as one is docile. Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of oppression, not joining the oppressor.

In his chapter on Murti-Bing, what Milosz does not say is also important, and the brief glimpses he gives us of the Polish intellectual climate before World War II are desperately important. Does Witkiewicz's Insatiability give a true picture of Poland in 1932? It may, certainly if we compare other literature

which comes to mind about Europe before the Hitler takeover. Unfortunately, we in America are illiterate about European cultural history. Most of the history we learn is either economically based or is based on who fought and won what war, and so we seldom see the intellectual climate that brought about the huge social changes. Our literature courses tend to tell us about Americans or Britons in Europe and so we have Hemingway's, Isherwood's, Gertrude Stein's or some other American author's view of Europe as seen through the eyes of Americans playing there, but none of the reality of Europeans living there. We know relatively little about the European mindset which allowed the takeover of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Stalin, et al. Is Witkiewicz's picture of Poland pre-Murti Bing an accurate representation of the Poland that was, and if it is, then the Poles could indeed not go back to the old ruling intellegentsia and to the leadership of the government-in-exile in London, who were of that class. But go where? Milosz states that religion was not a viable alternative for Poland. Religion was practiced only by the peasants (and by religion, we assume Roman Catholicism) while the intellectual elite (interestingly enough, probably educated in Catholic universities, many of them) were breathing such an ethereal atmosphere of learning that they were totally out of touch with the realities of the political world and with the spiritual base which anchored the worker and the peasant. It is no wonder that the alienated intellectual (p.8) longed to belong to the masses. Interestingly enough, now that he can indeed belong to the masses (i.e. in the political East), the intellectual realizes into what a trap he has fallen and longs to escape from the Worker State. The intellectual and the worker are not now and never were brothers -- yet the intellectual cannot and does not fit the bourgoise pattern, for he is determinately downwardly or upwardly mobile depending upon his success. Also, it is in the intellectual that the cultural history of his nation resides, for it is patently obvious

that what higher classical education eventually does is to carry the common culture to succeeding generations. It is only natural that pride in one's nation's art, literature, indeed all cultural pursuits must reside in those best educated to them. Hence the bind: Those who become the writers and intellectuals of the New Faith are those most in possession of the old, and those most likely to be aware of the poor fit the New Faith has upon the Old Ideas, and ipsolaterally, the poor fit the Old Ideas have for the New Times. Such, unfortunately, is the nature of the life of the intellectual and both the reward and the source of the discomfort. So the intellectual looks, if not to the East, then to the West. Yet, he cannot look to England, France, Germany because they were where the old ideas originated (since, as Milosz points out, Poland for centuries adopted the Western European ideas as its own), and if not there, where? America? Not really. Americans seem naive and inexperienced compared to Europeans. We have not been tried in the crucible of war on our own territory for over a hundred years. The East has convinced Poland that the terror Europe has gone through will be gone through also by the United States, because the ideas which "corrupted" Europe corrupt the Americans. And he finds himself feeling that it is unfair for America to have escaped the terror thus far (p.30). Particularly since his exposure to the Diamat, he keeps wondering when the fall predicted by the Party will come and if Fascism is doomed (and America by Party definition is Fascist) when will the end come? This is not too heinous a reading of America, by the way, depending upon whether one is part of the in-crowd or of the others with their noses to the windows looking in. Still, Milosz has a problem. He sees the masses in the West enjoying a standard of living far beyond that which the masses of the East can even imagine. It is the mass culture, not the standard of living, which dismays him. The mass

culture of America is unimpressive to Europeans. Obviously, much of Western culture is mindless. It is produced by market research firms which decide who has the disposable income to buy the product, and then produce only for that market, which effectively cuts out any who might buy something else, because nothing else is available, except possibly in university bookstores and on university campuses, where it is obviously consumed by the intellectual elite.

What Milosz suggests the people of Eastern Europe are looking for is leadership from the West, intellectual works that will bear the seed of hope for the future (p. 40). Christianity, for example, is looked at but not to. A reborn Christianity might be an important carrier of that message, but of what stripe. Modern totalitarianism has had to dispose of the Jew, and one suspects that a basic reason for antisemitism is that Jews are the "people of the Book." What the Bible addresses so pungently is the very question which Milosz's last chapter asks, "How can people live under constant fear? Embedded in the Judeo-Christian scripture is a message of hope, if one can convince the Eastern Europeans to look there for it. The old Testament, in the voices of prophets and poets, speaks for a people who are captive:

> By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we
> remembered Zion.
> On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps,
> Though our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs,
> And our despoilers urged us to be joyous, "Sing us the
> songs of Zion!"
>
> How can we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?
> If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten!
> May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not,
> If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.
>
> Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, the day
> of Jerusalem,
> When they said, "Raze it, raze it to the foundations!"
> O daugher of Babylon, you destroyer, happy the man who
> shall repay you the evil you have done us!
> Happy the man who shall seize and smash your little
> ones against the rock!

That is poetry of the oppressed! If the Roman church, which is for all intents and purposes the church available in Poland, can do with scripture what the Black church in America, for instance, has done with the Biblical theme of a people carried away into slavery, the possibilities are endless. The theme of dispersion (and Milosz poignantly describes the diaspora into which Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians have been driven) and restoration is a powerful theme in the prophets and as Christians we are not left without a voice. The question is,

can a church which has centered on a very different view of scriptural religion (i.e. contemplation of the dying Christ) turn and offer the kind of Biblical religion which probably sustained the Jews in the concentration camps and which American Blacks have today, which sustains them in an oppressive society which carried them into diaspora.

To get from A to B, one needs a bridge. I do not have a bridge. The foregoing to me was what the first part of the book brought to mind. The second part of the book brought forth other ideas.

The whole question of how artists relate to the question of social realism and dialectical materialism as set forth in the character sketches revealed more than just the characters of the men involved. It revealed a great deal about Milosz and occasioned many of the same questions that the first chapter raised. Milosz's acceptance, at first, of the discipline of social realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art, but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, but certainly not speak <u>for</u>. Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or

political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which a new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or the revolution must turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo. One must remember the excesses of Robespierre's government in France, for example. W.H.McNeill, writing of the French Revolution, in The Rise of the West says,

> "Liberty," after all, might mean the right of the majority to override every obstacle to its will. By an easy paradox, liberty might mean the right of a clique to enlighten the people, using exhortation and threat as normal stock-in-trade but in case of necessity resorting openly to violence in order to convince doubters and prevent enemies of the people from spreading the poison of deceit. But liberty might also mean the exact opposite: the right of individuals to do whatever they liked within the broadest practicable limits, even when their conduct displeased or offended a majority. In short, liberty might mean either a radical extension or a rigorous restriction of governmental authority; and the word was regularly invoked to justify both policies.

THE CHARACTER SKETCHES

Alpha

The difficulty I have with Alpha is that the possibility of selling out always exists -- each of us has a price (whether we believe it or not) and puts a value on what is needed to survive. Not everyone has the gift of martyrdom, and as one of my colleagues reminded MCC clergy (who are prime targets and understand martyrdom very well) at a conference recently, it is a gift that can be used only once. Alpha's importance and his ability to use common symbols to reach essential truths were such that he could sway large numbers, but he did not look at his responsibility to those he was moving to be ethical with them. Art must not be dishonest. Art is essentially the last stand of truth. Alpha became successful not only at the price of his own soul, but at the price of the souls of others. Alpha brought forth a generation of young loyalists who believed in

what he wrote and their reward was to be killed in the Warsaw uprising and if they survived that to be later jailed by the new warlords for being too loyal to their own nation and unable to become believers in the New Faith. Alpha's readers were caught in forces which were none of their doing.

Alpha mocked the absurdity that hoped for a sudden political change. He compared the old intelligentsia with the ethical purity of the New Faith. The Party applauded and he was rewarded. Faced with having to adhere to "social realism" he bled. His denunciation of his own past and his work was not demanded of him, it was a gift he made to the Party.

Beta

Beta became hooked on his own anger. All the fury he felt became his daily dose of venom. Milosz describes him as a "nihilist," offering nothing because he sees no hope, he accepts the New Faith, and becames caught up in its cadence of hatred. When one has nothing constructive to offer, one can always offer hatred. Moving faster and faster, he eventually cannot move fast enough to escape from his own disillusionment. Yet he could see a new order which was just within his grasp. His anger, which drove him to ruthlessness in his description of life in the concentration camp, drives him equally to ruthlessness with himself, and eventually to suicide.

Gamma

As the arbiter of who would publish and who would not, he would use the need of men like Milosz to write and he would climb the bureaucratic ladder at their expense, but he would always be afraid. Gamma is a hack in the service of the Revolution, but the revolution is aging, and eventually the nation will see through the subterfuge and will overturn it because it does not grow out of the people.

Frederick Douglass put it aptly when he said:

> Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening; they want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. This struggle may be a moral one or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never did and it never will. Find out what people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice which will be imposed upon them. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

As Milosz discusses Gamma he also discusses dialectical materialism and socialist realism and the attendant difficulties for writers, artists and other intellectuals and it began to make sense, and I began to share the atmosphere of his frustration as a poet and writer. It important for us to realize that poets need their own culture and language both as vehicle and as audience. To become a refugee means to learn to think, become acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of note (and it is important to recognize that this man is a poet of the finest caliber, as a Nobel laureate) which would be a very long process. For Milosz to weigh that against staying and working for what he believes is the oppressor of his people had to be a serious consideration. But, it enabled him to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of his chosen field. Without that, he was no one professionally and artistically and to be no one is to die.

Delta

Delta bears out in reality the saying that "only the mad are free." Delta, of all the writers depicted never was free because of his need for a patron to support his alcoholism. Yet, with the state as his patron he is freer than he ever was, and because his style is so mad, he possibly can get away with being closer to himself than the other writers, and probably speak more truth, although veiled truth. Yet, he is in some ways more dangerous to the State,

because he speaks in symbols that can be taken many ways and he can even be "apocalyptic," writing in a code which the authorities may miss (because of their literalness), but which the people may not. The potential is there for Delta to be free, maybe. As Milosz leaves him, he is about to be restored to political rectitude, for a time. How much truth, how much damage can he do if he is so minded, and sober enough to do it? One can only hope that Delta is dedicated enough to freedom, sober enough, and wise enough to take that advantage.

To quote McNeill again (P.838)

> A man may carry two quite separate cultural worlds about with him, so long as it is easy to draw the line between situations where one set of judgments and behavior patterns is appropriate and those in which the other set should be employed. But clear discrimination is not always possible. Indeed, the imperatives of one system may in critical circumstances conflict with those of the second to produce sudden shifts in individual behavior having incalculable and sometimes puzzling consequences for all concerned. In the mass, this sort of unstable individual behavior may resonate within an excited crowd to induce outbursts of sudden violence.

The State may not be aware how close to the surface violence is, and again it may, hence the necessity for Murti-Bing and those things which produce its soporific state.

Milosz's chapter on Ketman to me logically belongs at the end of the book. It is a means whereby those in slavery survive and in turn laugh or sneer at their captors. It is a lie, and everyone knows it is a lie. Yet it is a very useful lie. It is also contemptuous, and true contempt breeds anger in both the contemptuous and the contemptible. It is dangerous, and for that very reason it is a game which is played in earnest. It is a charade. I recognize in myself the ability to play at Ketman with the straight world, and the contempt I feel

for it when I am forced to play it, and the disrespect I feel for myself and for the one who makes me play it. All oppressed people are masters at Ketman, we just have not had a name for it up until now. Blacks in America, playing at Stepinfetchit or Aunt Jemima were playing Ketman. Gays playing it straight, are masters of Ketman. Liberal Christians in fundamentalist churches play at Ketman. We all share in this monstrous game of lies wherein we preserve our souls for yet one more day. But Ketman covers anger as well. And the anger which boils under the surface may erupt at some time. A revolution has a beginning, a middle, and an end. One cannot live in revolutionary days for ever. Eventually something like normalcy must take over, and is is probably true that thesis and antithesis eventually produce some synthesis.

Milosz says the effects of a revolution is like the effect of a flood. Six feet of silt cover everything and much that existed is torn up and deposited elsewhere. There is no way back to the status quo ante the revolution, because much that was present is no longer there. The French revolution effectively swept away the ancient vested interests that prevented power coming into the hands of the people and gave the citizenry power. But, it also produced Napoleon and the blood bath which Europe endured and which eventuated in economic ruin for some countries which would never recover their status prior to the Napoleonic wars (like Spain). It also began a series of political, economic, and philosophic movements which produced the very revolution which Milosz decries. Perhaps even now some force is being generated in Eastern Europe which will effect change. Certainly, while people continue to permit the situation there to exist and keep their true feelings hidden (using Murti-Bing and Ketman) or any other process which keeps alive hope and independent thought, there is the possibility of change. Farenheit 451 points to a truth; ideas do not have to be written

down to live, and ours has been a print-oriented culture since Gutenberg and a

script-oriented culture long before that, but any oral tradition in the world predates any written work and is a possibility when all other hopes of reaching the masses are impossible. Poets are bards, and if they can be enlisted on one side, they can be enlisted on the other.

There are questions which remain.
Since Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Lutheranism are primarily state churches the question arises, if the state dies, does the church die as well? And if it does, what about religion which is not a state church, but which requires voluntary association? Does this religion also die when the state dies? If it does not, is there a possibility for a resurgence of adherence to Catholicism in Poland now that association is not only voluntary but prohibited?

Why is the church and its influence growing in Third World countries? Two thirds of believers in Christianity now live in the Third World. Why does Christianity speak to them when it has ceased to speak effectively in Europe?

Is it possible that God as the God of the powerful is dying? By the very nature of the God of Judaism and Christianity, God is the God of the weak and oppressed and therefore as nations become aware of their oppression, as Poland has, that this visage of God comes more to the forefront and has more meaning. However, as the powerful find that the old faith which bolstered the status quo of the rich and powerful is no longer available, <u>that</u> Christianity dies, and a new Christianity, more in touch with its roots, begins to emerge. If so, there is hope for a new voice to be heard in Poland, and very likely it is being heard there now. I sincerely question whether Milosz and others of his generation will hear it because it is so foreign to the faith they knew.

THE CAPTIVE MIND

This paper will probably be more along the line of a personal reaction to Czeslaw Milosz's book, The Captive Mind, than a scholarly appraisal of it. This is primarily because I reacted emotionally to the book rather than having it just engage my mind, and I suspect that Milosz wanted the reader to feel something important when he wrote the book. Milosz is a poet, and feelings are often the stuff with which poets, in particular, deal. My reaction to the book, then, is a little difficult to describe, possibly because Milosz made me wary at first and was conflicted somewhat in my reception to the book.

To begin with, my grandmother is Hungarian but left Hungary in the 1890's, when there was a governmental reaction to Baptists promulgated by the Catholics then in power. I had only my grandmother's prejudices about the intellegentsia of Eastern Europe, and they were powerful. I also grew up in New York during the 1930's and 40's when it was not only allowed to be pro-Russian, but because of the war was mandatory to be anti- the European Rightists and pro- the European Left, including Russia. My distrust of the Right with all its antis, along with Milosz, made me much more open to a trust of Socialist writings. I believe that I grew up thinking that Communism had to be better than what had gone before when the intelligentsia (read remains of the old aristocracy), and particularly the Catholic intelligentsia held the reins. I also grew up wise enough to know that the "Worker's Paradise" was never paradise unless one were part of the Communist hierarchy. But then, Eastern Europe was never paradise unless one was part of the privileged class.

Having first gotten through my own prejudices and questions about Milosz's purpose (Who's side was he on anyway -- certainly not on the side of the revolutionaries!) and my questions about whether this was to be religious brain washing (and remember that I was a young adult during the McCarthy era, when the

cry was "Pinko, Communist, homosexual!" in that order) and another attempt on the part of the religious establishment (of whatever stripe) to tell us how good we are and how bad they are, and enlist our sympathies on the side of the displaced middle-class in Poland (and for that matter all of Eastern Europe). As I said, I began with my prejudices.

As I began to read I settled down and began to trust Milosz. By the time I had gotten through the character portrayals and finished the book, I was still conflicted, still wary, still questioning of whether I was won over to Milosz's side or still questioning whether I was being subjected to a Western equivalent of socialist realism (Republican realism?), but willing to reread the book. It took three readings for me to achieve some kind of equilibrium out of which I could begin to address a paper on this book. Milosz intends for the book to be battlefield for the mind, and indeed copies the enemy's way. Who is to say that in destroying the enemy before our eyes, he is not also accomplishing a second task, that of convincing by the same type of arguments used to disparage the West, that he can disparage the East just as effectively and convince us that the Right is right in their opinion of the New Faith. Without being able to question him personally, we will never know if Milosz is honest in his appraisal or merely feels that if he eats a man's bread, that he owes him loyalty and thereby hatred of his enemies (which would be a very Eastern European way of thinking).

On my second reading, Murti-Bing made a much greater impact, and I thought about Poles who had been raised to so fear and hate Russia, but were also so disenchanted by the world of Eastern Europe prior to World War II, and so incredibly destroyed by World War II (witness his later chapters on Alpha and

Beta) that something, anything that replaced upheaval had to be better. Milosz is able to weave a spell which draws one into the web of Murti-Bing and one can understand better the pull of a philosophy that replaces the nihilism of the Hitler years with a philosphy of serenity and happiness -- even if it did convey a blunting of the sensibilities. For people who have lost everything and seen their beloved country demolished, their historic cities bombed out of existence, and their culture obliterated, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks in the streets, and when one's city (witness Vilno) had passed back and forth through the centuries time after time, better Murti-Bing and an attitude of "this too will pass" (as have all the others), than another futile attempt to defend one's soil against far more powerful aggressors. Murti-Bing, peace and acceptance was at least better than attempting another war with absolutely no tools, and particularly in this age, no tools to compare with nuclear weapons. As my grandmother said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is impossible to drop bombs from the back of a farm wagon." One then accepts the inevitable, as one has accepted all previous inevitabilities. Rebellion is only an option if there is any hope for it succeeding, but workers with bricks in their hands are no match for Russian tanks and ~~us~~ Eastern nations have attempted revolts and wound up crying to the West "Where were you when we needed you?". These aggressors at least let one live, as long as one is docile. Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of oppression, not joining the oppressor.

In his chapter on Murti-Bing, what Milosz does not say is also important, and the brief glimpses he gives us of the Polish intellectual climate before World War II are desperately important. Does Witkiewicz's Insatiability give a true picture of Poland in 1932? It may, certainly if we compare other literature

which comes to mind about Europe before the Hitler takeover. Unfortunately, we in America are illiterate about European cultural history. Most of the history we learn is either economically based or is based on who fought and won what war, and so we seldom see the intellectual climate that brought about the huge social changes. Our literature courses tend to tell us about Americans or Britons in Europe and so we have Hemingway's, Isherwood's, Gertrude Stein's or some other American author's view of Europe as seen through the eyes of Americans playing there, but none of the reality of Europeans living there. We know relatively little about the European mindset which allowed the takeover of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Stalin, et al. Is Witkiewicz's picture of Poland pre-Murti Bing an accurate representation of the Poland that was, and if it is, then the Poles could indeed not go back to the old ruling intellegentsia and to the leadership of the government-in-exile in London, who were of that class. But go where? Milosz states that religion was not a viable alternative for Poland. Religion was practiced only by the peasants (and by religion, we assume Roman Catholicism) while the intellectual elite (interestingly enough, probably educated in Catholic universities, many of them) were breathing such an ethereal atmosphere of learning that they were totally out of touch with the realities of the political world and with the spiritual base which anchored the worker and the peasant. It is no wonder that the alienated intellectual (p.8) longed to belong to the masses. Interestingly enough, now that he can indeed belong to the masses (i.e. in the political East), the intellectual realizes into what a trap he has fallen and longs to escape from the Worker State. The intellectual and the worker are not now and never were brothers -- yet the intellectual cannot and does not fit the bourgoise pattern, for he is determinately downwardly or upwardly mobile depending upon his success. Also, it is in the intellectual that the cultural history of his nation resides, for it is patently obvious that what higher

classical education eventually does is to carry the common culture to succeeding generations. It is only natural that pride in one's nation's art, literature, indeed all cultural pursuits must reside in those best educated to them. Hence the bind: Those who become the writers and intellectuals of the New Faith are those most in possession of the old, and those most likely to be aware of the poor fit the New Faith has upon the Old Ideas, and ipsolaterally, the poor fit the Old Ideas have for the New Times. Such, unfortunately, is the nature of the life of the intellectual and both the reward and the source of the discomfort. So the intellectual looks, if not to the East, then to the West. Yet, he cannot look to England, France, Germany because they were where the old ideas originated (since, as Milosz points out, Poland for centuries adopted the Western European ideas as its own), and if not there, where? America? Not really. Americans seem naive and inexperienced compared to Europeans. We have not been tried in the crucible of war on our own territory for over a hundred years. The East has convinced Poland that the terror Europe has gone through will be gone through also by the United States, because the ideas which corrupted Europe corrupt the Americans. And he finds himself feeling that it is unjust for America to have escaped the terror thus far (p.30). Particularly since his exposure to the Diamat, he keeps wondering when the fall predicted by the Party will come and if Fascism is doomed (and America by Party definition is Fascist -- which is not too heinous a reading of much of current America, by the way, depending upon whether one is part of the in-crowd or the others with their noses to the windows looking in) when will the end come?

Still, Milosz has a problem. He sees the masses in the West enjoying a standard of living far beyond that which the masses of the East can even imagine. It is the mass culture, not the standard of living, which dismays him. The mass

culture of America is unimpressive to Europeans. Obviously, much of Western culture is mindless. It is produced by market research firms which decide who has the disposable income to buy the product, and then produce only for that market, which effectively cuts out any who might buy something else, because nothing else is available, except possibly in university bookstores and on university campuses, where it is obviously consumed by the intellectual elite.

What Milosz suggests the people of Eastern Europe are looking for is leadership from the West, intellectual works that will bear the seed of hope for the future (p. 40). Christianity, for example, is looked at but not to. A reborn Christianity might be an important carrier of that message, but of what stripe. Modern totalitarianism has had to dispose of the Jew, and one suspects that a basic reason for antisemitism is that Jews are the "people of the Book." What the Bible addresses so pungently is the very question which Milosz's last chapter asks, "How can people live under constant fear? Embedded in the Judeo-Christian scripture is a message of hope, if one can convince the Eastern Europeans to look there for it. The old Testament, in the voices of prophets and poets, speaks for a people who are captive:

> By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we
> remembered Zion.
> On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps,
> Though our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs,
> And our despoilers urged us to be joyous, "Sing us the
> songs of Zion!"
>
> How can we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?
> If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten!
> May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not,
> If I place not Jerusalem ahead of my joy.
>
> Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom, the day
> of Jerusalem,
> When they said, "Raze it, raze it to the foundations!"
> O daugher of Babylon, you destroyer, happy the man who
> shall repay you the evil you have done us!
> Happy the man who shall seize and smash your little
> ones against the rock!

That is poetry of the oppressed! If the Roman church, which is for all intents and purposes the church available in Poland, can do with scripture what the Black church in America, for instance, has done with the Biblical theme of a people carried away into slavery, the possibilities are endless. The theme of dispersion (and Milosz poignantly describes the diaspora into which Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians have been driven) and restoration is a powerful theme in the prophets and as Christians we are not left without a voice. The question is, can a church which has centered on a very different view of scriptural religion (i.e. contemplation of the dying Christ) turn and offer the kind of Biblical religion which probably sustained the Jews in the concentration camps and which American Blacks have today, which sustains them in an oppressive society which carried them into diaspora.

To get from A to B, one needs a bridge. I do not have a bridge. The foregoing to me was what the first part of the book brought to mind. The second part of the book brought forth other ideas.

The whole question of how artists relate to the question of social realism and dialectical materialism as set forth in the character sketches revealed more than just the characters of the men involved. It revealed a great deal about Milosz and occasioned many of the same questions that the first chapter raised. Milosz's acceptance, at first, of the discipline of social realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art, but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, but certainly not speak <u>for</u>. Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or

political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which a new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or the revolution must turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo. One must remember the excesses of Robespierre's government in France, for example. W.H.McNeill, writing of the French Revolution, in The Rise of the West says,

> "Liberty," after all, might mean the right of the majority to override every obstacle to its will. By an easy paradox, liberty might mean the right of a clique to enlighten the people, using exhortation and threat as normal stock-in-trade but in case of necessity resorting openly to violence in order to convince doubters and prevent enemies of the people from spreading the poison of deceit. But liberty might also mean the exact opposite: the right of individuals to do whatever they liked within the broadest practicable limits, even when their conduct displeased or offended a majority. In short, liberty might mean either a radical extension or a rigorous restriction of governmental authority; and the word was regularly invoked to justify both policies.

THE CHARACTER SKETCHES

Alpha

The difficulty I have with Alpha is that the possibility of selling out always exists -- each of us has a price (whether we believe it or not) and puts a value on what is needed to survive. Not everyone has the gift of martyrdom, and as one of my colleagues reminded MCC clergy (who are prime targets and understand martyrdom very well) at a conference recently, it is a gift that can be used only once. Alpha's importance and his ability to use common symbols to reach essential truths were such that he could sway large numbers, but he did not look at his responsibility to those he was moving to be ethical with them. Art must not be dishonest. Art is essentially the last stand of truth. Alpha became successful not only at the price of his own soul, but at the price of the souls of others. Alpha brought forth a generation of young loyalists who believed in

what he wrote and their reward was to be killed in the Warsaw uprising and if they survived that to be later jailed by the new warlords for being too loyal to their own nation and unable to become believers in the New Faith. Alpha's readers were caught in forces which were none of their doing.

Alpha mocked the absurdity that hoped for a sudden political change. He compared the old intelligentsia with the ethical purity of the New Faith. The Party applauded and he was rewarded. Faced with having to adhere to "social realism" he bled. His denunciation of his own past and his work was not demanded of him, it was a gift he made to the Party.

Beta

Beta became hooked on his own anger. All the fury he felt became his daily dose of venom. Milosz describes him as a "nihilist," offering nothing because he sees no hope, he accepts the New Faith, and becames caught up in its cadence of hatred. When one has nothing constructive to offer, one can always offer hatred. Moving faster and faster, he eventually cannot move fast enough to escape from his own disillusionment. Yet he could see a new order which was just within his grasp. His anger, which drove him to ruthlessness in his description of life in the concentration camp, drives him equally to ruthlessness with himself, and eventually to suicide.

Gamma

As the arbiter of who would publish and who would not, he would use the need of men like Milosz to write and he would climb the bureaucratic ladder at their expense, but he would always be afraid. Gamma is a hack in the service of the Revolution, but the revolution is aging, and eventually the nation will see through the subterfuge and will overturn it because it does not grow out of the people.

Frederick Douglass put it aptly when he said:

> Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening; they want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. This struggle may be a moral one or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never did and it never will. Find out what people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice which will be imposed upon them. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

As Milosz discusses Gamma he also discusses dialectical materialism and socialist realism and the attendant difficulties for writers, artists and other intellectuals and it began to make sense, and I began to share the atmosphere of his frustration as a poet and writer. It important for us to realize that poets need their own culture and language both as vehicle and as audience. To become a refugee means to learn to think, become acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of note (and it is important to recognize that this man is a poet of the finest caliber, as a Nobel laureate) which would be a very long process. For Milosz to weigh that against staying and working for what he believes is the oppressor of his people had to be a serious consideration. But, it enabled him to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of his chosen field. Without that, he was no one professionally and artistically and to be no one is to die.

Delta

Delta bears out in reality the saying that "only the mad are free." Delta, of all the writers depicted never was free because of his need for a patron to support his alcoholism. Yet, with the state as his patron he is freer than he ever was, and because his style is so mad, he possibly can get away with being closer to himself than the other writers, and probably speak more truth, although veiled truth. Yet, he is in some ways more dangerous to the State,

because he speaks in symbols that can be taken many ways and he can even be "apocalyptic," writing in a code which the authorities may miss (because of their literalness), but which the people may not. The potential is there for Delta to be free, maybe. As Milosz leaves him, he is about to be restored to political rectitude, for a time. How much truth, how much damage can he do if he is so minded, and sober enough to do it? One can only hope that Delta is dedicated enough to freedom, sober enough, and wise enough to take that advantage.

To quote McNeill again (P.838)

> A man may carry two quite separate cultural worlds about with him, so long as it is easy to draw the line between situations where one set of judgments and behavior patterns is appropriate and those in which the other set should be employed. But clear discrimination is not always possible. Indeed, the imperatives of one system may in critical circumstances conflict with those of the second to produce sudden shifts in individual behavior having incalculable and sometimes puzzling consequences for all concerned. In the mass, this sort of unstable individual behavior may resonate within an excited crowd to induce outbursts of sudden violence.

The State may not be aware how close to the surface violence is, and again it may, hence the necessity for Murti-Bing and those things which produce its soporific state.

Milosz's chapter on Ketman to me logically belongs at the end of the book. It is a means whereby those in slavery survive and in turn laugh or sneer at their captors. It is a lie, and everyone knows it is a lie. Yet it is a very useful lie. It is also contemptuous, and true contempt breeds anger in both the contemptuous and the contemptible. It is dangerous, and for that very reason it is a game which is played in earnest. It is a charade. I recognize in myself the ability to play at Ketman with the straight world, and the contempt I feel

for it when I am forced to play it, and the disrespect I feel for myself and for the one who makes me play it. All oppressed people are masters at Ketman, we just have not had a name for it up until now. Blacks in America, playing at Stepinfetchit or Aunt Jemima were playing Ketman. Gays playing it straight, are masters of Ketman. Liberal Christians in fundamentalist churches play at Ketman. We all share in this monstrous game of lies wherein we preserve our souls for yet one more day. But Ketman covers anger as well. And the anger which boils under the surface may erupt at some time. A revolution has a beginning, a middle, and an end. One cannot live in revolutionary days for ever. Eventually something like normalcy must take over. It is probably true that thesis + antithesis produces synthesis. Milosz says the effects of a revolution is like the effect of a flood. Six feet of silt cover everything and much that existed is torn up and deposited elsewhere. There is no way back to the status quo ante the revolution, because much that was present is no longer there. The French revolution effectively swept away the ancient vested interests that prevented power coming into the hands of the people and gave the citizenry power. But, it also produced Napoleon and the blood bath which Europe endured and which eventuated into economic ruin for some countries which would never recover their status prior to the Napoleonic wars (like Spain). It also began a series of political, economic, and philosophic movements which produced the very revolution which Milosz decries. Perhaps even now some force is being generated in Eastern Europe which will effect change. Certainly, ~~unless~~ while people continue to permit the situation there to exist and keep their true feelings hidden (using Murti-Bing and Ketman) or any other process which keeps alive hope and independent thought, there is the possibility of change. Farenheit ~~415~~ 451 points to a truth; ideas do not have to be written down to live, and ours has been a print-oriented culture since Gutenberg and a

script-oriented culture long before that, but any oral tradition in the world predates any written work and is a possibility when all other hopes of reaching the masses are impossible. Poets are bards, and if they can be enlisted on one side, they can be enlisted on the other.

There are questions which remain.

Since Catholicism, Aglicanism, and Lutheranism are primarily state churches, and the question arises, if the state dies, does the church die as well? And if it does, what about religion which is not a state church, but which requires voluntary association. Does this religion also die when the state dies? And if it does not, is there a possibility for a resurgence of adherence to Catholicism in Poland now that association is not only voluntary but prohibited?

Why is the church and its influence growing in Third World countries? Two thirds of believers in Christianity now live in the Third World. Why does Christianity speak to them when it has ceased to speak effectively in Europe?

Is it possible that God as the God of the powerful is dying, but by the very nature of the God of Judaism and Christianity, God is the God of the weak and oppressed and therefore as nations become aware of their oppression, as Poland has, that this visage of God comes more to the forefront and has more meaning? However, as the powerful find that the old faith which bolstered the status quo of the rich and powerful is no longer available, that Christianity dies, and a new Christianity, more in touch with its roots, begins to emerge. If so, there is hope for a new voice to be heard in Poland, and very likely is being heard there now. I sincerely question whether Milosz and others of his generation will hear it because it is so foreign to the faith they knew.

THE CAPTIVE MIND

The Captive Mind made me wary. To have been a homosexual in America for 40+ years and to hear the same people yelling (through those years), "Pinko, Communist, homosexual," in the same breath, and to know that the allies of those screaming are the religious right (rite?) and the right wing intellectuals, made many of my "be on guard" sensors alert. Additionally, my grandmother is a Hungarian once-refugee, who came to America running as a Baptist from one of Hungary's holy wars -- where the victor was the Catholic Church and the intelligentsia then in power. I have learned to be wary..

Milosz weaves a spell. One is indeed able, after reading this book, to understand the pull of the pill of Murti-Bing and its soothing power. For people who have lost everything in war after war, and who are asked ~~to~~ risk one more time and fight the only order that even looks capable to bringing order out of utter chaos, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. ~~My grandfather said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is very hard to drop bombs from the backs of farm wagons." Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks. Better Murti-Bing and "this too will pass"~~ (as have all the others). Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of rebellion, not joining the oppressor.

I was most impressed with his speaking as a poet, and realizing that poets need their own cultures and language both as vehicle and as audience; and to learn to think, be acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of some note would be a very long process. For him to weigh that against staying and working for the oppressor, but being able to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of one's chosen field was the most important consideration. Without that, he was

THE CAPTIVE MIND

The Captive Mind made me wary. To have been a homosexual in America for 40+ years and to hear the same people yelling (through those years), "Pinko, Communist, homosexual," in the same breath, and to know that the allies of those screaming are the religious right (rite?) and the right wing intellectuals, made many of my "be on guard" sensors alert. Additionally, my grandmother is a Hungarian once-refugee, who came to America running as a Baptist from one of Hungary's holy wars -- where the victor was the Catholic Church and the intelligentsia then in power. I have learned to be wary.

Milosz weaves a spell. One is indeed able, after reading this book, to understand the pull of the pill of Murti-Bing and its soothing power. For people who have lost everything in war after war, and who are asked to risk one more time and fight the only order that even looks capable to bringing order out of utter chaos, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. My grandfather said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is very hard to drop bombs from the backs of farm wagons." Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks. Better Murti-Bing and "this too will pass" (as have all the others). Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of rebellion, not joining the oppressor.

I was most impressed with his speaking as a poet, and realizing that poets need their own cultures and language both as vehicle and as audience; and to learn to think, be acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of some note would be a very long process. For him to weight that against staying and working for the oppressor, but being able to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of one's chosen field was the most important consideration. Without that, he was no one. To be no one is to die professionally and artistically.

Which leads to social realism. Milosz's acceptance of the discipline of socialist realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the Church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, and certainly in good faith was hard pressed to speak for.

Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which the new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or it must certainly turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo.

To be sure, Eastern Europe has a long tradition of trying to maintain small national states over against the encroaching power of larger, more powerful neighbors (or non-neighbors, in the case of Sweden's conquest of Poland). How eventually can the world assure Poland, Hungary, other Baltic and Balkan states sovereignty and the freedom to pursue their own goals without the West-East tug-of-war or threats of domination. This is not a new battle for these countries, it goes back to Atilla the Hun. The methods, to be sure, have changed, and the attempt to change the total national ideology, culture, language and political base is relatively new to this century. However, from

the viewpoint of the oppressor nation, this is far more effective than what has gone before and has been very impermanent. Of course, this does not make it right, but it certainly is more pragmatic. If one sets out to conquer, the most effective way is certainly better than half measures.

The difficulty for me in all of this is that each side decides that what the other is doing is politically worthy of outrage. But who is the victim and does the victim periodically change is this passing back and forth of nations. Is Hungary/Poland in the hands of the Catholic intelligentsia a better place for human beings than Murti-Bing? Well, yes, if you are a Catholic intellectual. On the other hand, if you are a Baptist, then the nation under the Catholic intelligentsia wasn't such a healthy place, either. And maybe, Murti-Bing is just a way-station on the road to change. Is thought control by sin and guilt, in the hands of the church healthier for human beings than dialectical materialism? From the position of a gay person who has been a Communist (I joined American Youth for Democracy in 1945) and who has returned to Christianity only after many years of oppression by the Church (Baptist and Catholic alike), and who has had to fight the Church/State complex (where the Catholic Church was referred to by the Gay Community as "Terry and the Prelates"), unfortunately I still find myself having to use Ketman in America in a thousand ways and find my sexual liberty threatened by the right and by the relgious forces in power. Obviously, it would be so under the Eastern Puritans as well. What Milosz brings home to me is the certaintude of my having to wish "a pox on both their houses," and the responsibility to continue to search for some new voice, some new philosophy, some new Messiah who offers freedom in all sorts of ways to human beings, to arise and set us all free.

Marjorie F. Ragona

THE CAPTIVE MIND

The Captive Mind made me wary. To have been a homosexual in America for 40+ years and to hear the same people yelling (through those years), "Pinko, Communist, homosexual," in the same breath, and to know that the allies of those screaming are the religious right (rite?) and the right wing intellectuals, made many of my "be on guard" sensors alert. Additionally, my grandmother is a Hungarian once-refugee, who came to America running as a Baptist from one of Hungary's holy wars -- where the victor was the Catholic Church and the intelligentsia then in power. I have learned to be wary.

Milosz weaves a spell. One is indeed able, after reading this book, to understand the pull of the pill of Murti-Bing and its soothing power. For people who have lost everything in war after war, and who are asked to risk one more time and fight the only order that even looks capable to bringing order out of utter chaos, Murti-Bing is to swallow before one is swallowed. My grandfather said of the Hungarian revolt, "It is very hard to drop bombs from the backs of farm wagons." Bricks, the Hungarians found, were not an effective weapon against tanks. Better Murti-Bing and "this too will pass" (as have all the others). Apathy, despite Milosz, is the other side of rebellion, not joining the oppressor.

I was most impressed with his speaking as a poet, and realizing that poets need their own cultures and language both as vehicle and as audience; and to learn to think, be acculturated, and write well enough in a second (or third) language to regain one's standing as a literary figure of some note would be a very long process. For him to weight that against staying and working for the oppressor, but being able to continue working at least somewhat effectively in some part of one's chosen field was the most important consideration. Without that, he was no one. To be no one is to die professionally and artistically.

Which leads to social realism. Milosz's acceptance of the discipline of socialist realism as a condition of his being allowed to publish, and his artistic conscience eventually rebelling against what is essentially non-art but primarily political didacticism (and certainly the Church would be the first to recognize didacticism as non-art, but useful) placed Milosz in an untenable position. He could not write, not speak out against, and certainly in good faith was hard pressed to speak for.

Yet, is there not something in the conversion period following a revolution (social or political) which makes it necessary for a period of time during which the new nation must enforce loyalty from its citizenry and even its intellectuals, or it must certainly turn into just another abortive attempt to overturn the status quo.

To be sure, Eastern Europe has a long tradition of trying to maintain small national states over against the encroaching power of larger, more powerful neighbors (or non-neighbors, in the case of Sweden's conquest of Poland). How eventually can the world assure Poland, Hungary, other Baltic and Balkan states sovereignty and the freedom to pursue their own goals without the West-East tug-of-war or threats of domination. This is not a new battle for these countries, it goes back to Atilla the Hun. The methods, to be sure, have changed, and the attempt to change the total national ideology, culture, language and political base is relatively new to this century. However, from

the viewpoint of the oppressor nation, this is far more effective than what has gone before and has been very impermanent. Of course, this does not make it right, but it certainly is more pragmatic. If one sets out to conquer, the most effective way is certainly better than half measures.

The difficulty for me in all of this is that each side decides that what the other is doing is politically worthy of outrage. But who is the victim and does the victim periodically change is this passing back and forth of nations. Is Hungary/Poland in the hands of the Catholic intelligentsia a better place for human beings than Murti-Bing? Well, yes, if you are a Catholic intellectual. On the other hand, if you are a Baptist, then the nation under the Catholic intelligentsia wasn't such a healthy place, either. And maybe, Murti-Bing is just a way-station on the road to change. Is thought control by sin and guilt, in the hands of the church healthier for human beings than dialectical materialism? From the position of a gay person who has been a Communist (I joined American Youth for Democracy in 1945) and who has returned to Christianity only after many years of oppression by the Church (Baptist and Catholic alike), and who has had to fight the Church/State complex (where the Catholic Church was referred to by the Gay Community as "Terry and the Prelates"), unfortunately I still find myself having to use Ketman in America in a thousand ways and find my sexual liberty threatened by the right and by the relgious forces in power. Obviously, it would be so under the Eastern Puritans as well. What Milosz brings home to me is the certaintude of my having to wish "a pox on both their houses," and the responsibility to continue to search for some new voice, some new philosophy, some new Messiah who offers freedom in all sorts of ways to human beings, to arise and set us all free.

Marjorie F. Ragona

GOD IS DEAD IN GEORGIA

Eminent Deity Succumbs During Surgery—Succession in Doubt As All Creation Groans

LBJ ORDERS FLAGS AT HALF STAFF

Special to The New York Times

ATLANTA, GA., Nov. 9—God, creator of the universe, principal deity of the world's Jews, ultimate reality of Christians, and most eminent of all divinities, died late yesterday during major surgery undertaken to correct a massive diminishing influence. His exact age is not known, but close friends estimate that it greatly exceeded that of all other extant beings. While he did not, in recent years, maintain any fixed abode, his house was said to consist of many mansions.

The cause of death could not be immediately determined, pending an autopsy, but the deity's surgeon, Thomas J. J. Altizer, 38, of Emory University in Atlanta, indicated possible cardiac insufficiency. Assisting Dr. Altizer in the unsuccessful surgery were Dr. Paul van Buren of Temple University, Philadelphia; Dr. William Hamilton of Colgate-Rochester, Rochester, N. Y.; and Dr. Gabriel Vahanian of Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.

Word of the death, long rumored, was officially disclosed to reporters at five minutes before midnight after a full day of mounting anxiety and the coming and going of ecclesiastical dignitaries and members of the immediate family. At the bedside, when the end came, were, in addition to the attending surgeons and several nurses, the Papal Nuncio to the United States, representing His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, Vicar of Christ on Earth and Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church; Iakovos, Archbishop of North and South America, representing the Orthodox Churches; Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, representing the World Council of Churches, predominantly a Protestant institution; Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum of New York City, representing the tribes of Israel, chosen people, according to their faith, of the deceased; The Rev. William Moyers, Baptist minister, representing President Johnson; the 3rd Secretary of the Soviet embassy in Trinidad, representing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and a number of unidentified curious bystanders.

Unable to be in Atlanta owing to the pressure of business at the second Vatican Council, now in session, the Pope, in Rome, said, in part: "We are deeply distressed for we have suffered an incalculable loss. The contributions of God to the Church cannot be measured, and it is difficult to imagine how we shall proceed without Him." Rumors swept through the Council, meeting under the great vaulted dome of St. Peter's, that, before adjourning the Council in December, the Pope will proclaim God a saint, an action, if taken, that would be wholly without precedent in the history of the Church. Several aged women were reported to have come forward with claims of miraculous cures due to God's intervention. One woman, a 103 year old Bulgarian peasant, is said to have conceived a son at the very instant God expired. Proof of miracles is a preconditions, for sanctification according to ancient tradition of the Roman Catholic faith.

In Johnson City, Texas, President Johnson, recuperating from his recent gall bladder surgery, was described by aides as "profoundly

god is dead in georgia

ANTHONY TOWNE

FROM *motive*, FEBRUARY 1966. REPRINTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF *motive*. ANTHONY TOWNE IS A FREELANCE POET AND EDITOR.

upset." He at once directed that all flags should be at half-staff until after the funeral. The First Lady and the two presidential daughters, Luci and Lynda, were understood to have wept openly. Luci, 18, the younger daughter, whose engagement has been lately rumored, is a convert to Roman Catholicism. It is assumed that the President and his family, including his cousin, Oriole, will attend the last rites, if the international situation permits. Both houses of Congress met in Washington at noon today and promptly adjourned after passing a joint resolution expressing "grief and great respect for the departed spiritual leader." Sen. Wayne Morse, Dem. of Oregon, objected on the grounds that the resolution violated the principle of separation of church and state, but he was overruled by Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who remarked that "this is not a time for partisan politics."

Plans for the deity's funeral are incomplete. Reliable sources suggested that extensive negotiations may be necessary in order to select a church for the services and an appropriate liturgy. Dr. Wilhelm Pauck, theologian, of Union Seminary in New York City proposed this morning that it would be "fitting and seemly" to inter the remains in the ultimate ground of all being, but it is not known whether that proposal is acceptable to the family. Funerals for divinities, common in ancient times, have been exceedingly rare in recent centuries, and it is understood that the family wishes to review details of earlier funerals before setting upon rites suitable for God.

(In New York, meanwhile, the stock market dropped sharply in early trading. Volume was heavy. One broker called it the most active market day since the assassination of President Kennedy, Nov. 22, 1963. The market rallied in late trading, after reports were received that Jesus—see 'Man in the News,' p. 36, col. 4—who survives, plans to assume a larger role in management of the universe.)

Reaction from the world's great and from the man in the street was uniformly incredulous. "At least he's out of his misery," commented one housewife in an Elmira, N.Y., supermarket. "I can't believe it," said the Right Reverend Horace W. B. Donegan, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York, who only last week celebrated the 15th anniversary of his installation as Bishop. In Paris, President de Gaulle, in a 30 second appearance on national television, proclaimed: "God is dead! Long live the republic! Long live France!" Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, widow of the late President, was reported "in seclusion" in her Fifth Avenue apartment. "She's had about all she can take," a close friend of the Kennedy family said. News of the death was included in a one sentence statement, without comment, on the 3rd page of Pravda, official organ of the Soviet government. The passing of God has not been disclosed to the 800 million Chinese who live behind the bamboo curtain.

Public reaction in this country was perhaps summed up by an elderly retired streetcar conductor in Passaic, New Jersey, who said: "I never met him, of course. Never even saw him. But from what I heard I guess he was a real nice fellow. Tops." From Independence, Mo., former President Harry S. Truman, who received the news in his Kansas City barbershop, said: "I'm always sorry to hear somebody is dead. It's a damn shame." In Gettysburg, Pa., former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, released, through a military aide, the following statement: "Mrs. Eisenhower joins me in heartfelt sympathy to the family and many friends of the late God. He was, I always felt, a force for moral good in the universe. Those of us who were privileged to know him admired the probity of his character, the breadth of his compassion, the depth of his intellect. Generous almost to a fault, his many acts of kindness to America will never be forgotten. It is a very great loss indeed. He will be missed."

From Basel, Switzerland, came word that Dr. Karl Barth, venerable Protestant theologian, informed of the death of God, declared: "I don't know who died in Atlanta, but whoever he was he's an impostor." Dr. Barth, 79, with the late Paul Tillich, is widely regarded as the foremost theologian of the 20th Century.

(There have been unconfirmed reports that Jesus of Nazareth, 33, a carpenter and reputed son of God, who survives, will assume the authority, if not the title, of the deceased deity. Jesus, sometimes called the Christ, was himself a victim of death having succumbed some 1932 years ago in Palestine, now the state of Israel purportedly on orders of a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and at the behest of certain citizens of Jerusalem. This event, described by some as 'deicide,' has lately occupied the deliberations of the Vatican Council, which has solemnly exonerated the Jews generally of responsibility for the alleged crime. The case is complicated by the fact that Jesus, although he died, returned to life, and so may not have died at all. Diplomats around the world were speculating today on the place the resurrected Jesus will occupy in the power vacuum created by the sudden passing of God.)

Dr. Altizer, God's surgeon, in an exclusive interview with the Times, stated this morning that the death was "not unexpected." "He had been ailing for some time," Dr. Altizer said, "and lived much longer than most of us thought possible." He noted that the death of God had, in fact, been prematurely announced in the last century by the famed German surgeon, Nietzsche. Nietzsche, who was insane the last ten years of his life, may have confused "certain symptoms of morbidity in the aged patient with actual death, a mistake any busy surgeon will occasionally make," Dr. Altizer suggested. "God was an excellent patient, compliant, cheerful, alert. Every comfort modern science could provide was made available to him. He did not suffer—he just, as it were, slipped out of our grasp." Dr. Altizer also disclosed that plans for a memorial to God have already been discussed informally, and it is likely a committee of eminent clergymen and laymen will soon be named to raise funds for use in "research into the causes of death in deities, an area of medicine many physicians consider has been too long neglected." Dr. Altizer indicated, finally, that he had great personal confidence that Jesus, relieved of the burdens of divinity, would, in time, assume a position of great importance in the universe. "We have lost," he said, "a father, but we have gained a son."

(Next Sunday's New York Times will include, without extra charge, a 24-page full-color supplement with many photographs, reviewing the major events of God's long reign, the circumstances of his sudden and untimely death, and prospects for a godless future. The editors will be grateful for

pertinent letters, photographs, visions and the like.)

There has been as yet no statement from Jesus, but a close associate, the Holy Ghost, has urged prayer and good works. He also said that it is the wish of the family that in lieu of flowers contributions be made to the Building Fund of St. John the Divine in New York City so that the edifice may be finished.